

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a fusion polypeptide that forms a multimer capable of binding ~~a cytokine~~ interleukin-18 (IL-18) to form a nonfunctional complex, comprising:

a) a nucleotide sequence encoding a first fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of ~~the cytokine~~ an IL-18 binding portion of ~~the an~~ an extracellular domain of ~~the a~~ specificity determining component of ~~a cytokine's~~ an IL-18 receptor;

b) a nucleotide sequence encoding a second fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of ~~the cytokine~~ an IL-18 binding portion of ~~the an~~ an extracellular domain of ~~the a~~ signal transducing component of ~~a cytokine's~~ an IL-18 receptor; and

c) a nucleotide sequence encoding a third fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of a multimerizing component.

2. (Currently amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1 ~~or 26~~, wherein the nucleotide sequence encoding the first component is upstream of the nucleotide sequence encoding the second component.

3. (Currently amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1 ~~or 26~~, wherein the nucleotide sequence encoding the first component is downstream of the nucleotide sequence encoding the second component.

4 – 9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently amended) The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1 ~~or 26~~, wherein the multimerizing component comprises an immunoglobulin derived domain.

11. (Original) The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 10, wherein the immunoglobulin derived domain is selected from the group consisting of the Fc domain of IgG, the heavy chain of IgG, and the light chain of IgG.

12. (Currently amended) A fusion polypeptide encoded by the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1 ~~or 26~~.

13. (Currently amended) A composition capable of binding ~~a cytokine~~ IL-18 to form a nonfunctional complex comprising a multimer of the fusion polypeptide of claim 12.

14. (Original) The composition of claim 13, wherein the multimer is a dimer.

15. (Currently amended) A vector which comprises the nucleic acid molecule of claim 1 ~~or 26~~.

16. (Currently amended) An expression vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 1 ~~or 26~~, wherein the nucleic acid molecule is operatively linked to an expression control sequence.

17. (Original) A host-vector system for the production of a fusion polypeptide which comprises the expression vector of claim 16, in a suitable host cell.

18. (Original) The host-vector system of claim 17, wherein the suitable host cell is a bacterial cell, yeast cell, insect cell, or mammalian cell.

19. (Currently amended) The host-vector system of claim 17, wherein the suitable host cell is ~~E. coli~~ selected from the group consisting of E. coli, COS, CHO, 293, BHK, and NSO.

20-24. Cancelled .

25. (Original) A method of producing a fusion polypeptide which comprises growing cells of the host-vector system of claim 17, under conditions permitting production of the fusion polypeptide and recovering the fusion polypeptide so produced.

26. (Currently amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a fusion polypeptide that forms a dimer capable of binding ~~a cytokine~~ interleukin-18 (IL-18) to form a nonfunctional complex, comprising:

a) a nucleotide sequence encoding a first fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of ~~the cytokine~~ an IL-18 binding portion of ~~the an~~ extracellular domain of ~~the a~~ specificity determining component of ~~a cytokine's~~ an IL-18 receptor;

b) a nucleotide sequence encoding a second fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of ~~the cytokine~~ an IL-18 binding portion of ~~the an~~ extracellular domain of ~~the a~~ signal transducing component of ~~a cytokine's~~ an IL-18 receptor; and

c) a nucleotide sequence encoding a third fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of a multimerizing component.

27-28. Cancelled.

29. (New) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

30. (New) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

31. (New) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 26, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

32. (New) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 26, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

33. (New) A dimeric interleukin-18 (IL-18) antagonist capable of binding IL-18 to form a nonfunctional complex, comprising:

a) a first fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of an IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component of an IL-18 receptor;

b) a second fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of an IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component of an IL-18 receptor; and

c) a third fusion polypeptide component comprising the amino acid sequence of a multimerizing component.

34. (New) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 33, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a specificity determining component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.

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35. (New) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 33, wherein the IL-18 binding portion of an extracellular domain of a signal transducing component is that portion necessary to form a complex with IL-18.